

**State of New Hampshire
Division of Homeland Security and Emergency
Management**



**Effective Solutions for Increased
Security in NH Public Schools**

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Introduction

This document was prepared by the New Hampshire Department of Safety, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. It is a product of the Physical Security Self-Assessment Questionnaire produced in conjunction with many state and local partners. A copy of the questionnaire is available on the web at:

www.nh.gov/safety/divisions/hsem/

After the release of the Physical Security Self-Assessment Questionnaire, it became apparent that school buildings were at varied levels of improved security. As a result we decided to develop an outline of suggested ways that school facility managers may choose to consider making upgrades to their existing facilities. All of these areas carry varying levels of financial and environmental impacts to schools.

These suggested considerations are based on three core standards for increasing physical security at existing school buildings. These core standards are identified as Surveillance, Access Control and Emergency Alerting.

A. Surveillance:

Surveillance is a core capability that all schools should have. The ability to view surroundings both internal and external is a key element in early warning and defensive posturing. Surveillance cameras that are visible to the public mitigate the concept of anonymity and increase transparency in and around the school facility. Key leadership and certain administrative personnel should engage in and have routine access and exposure to surveillance monitoring as needed for security purposes. Surveillance monitoring should be located in areas of the school that have the ability to restrict access but not so restrictive that monitoring becomes difficult to access by authorized personnel during emergencies.

B. Access Control:

Actively engaging/controlling the flow of people into the school facility is another core capability that all schools should have. Access control protects against unauthorized persons gaining access to facilities. Access Control involves some level of interaction with school staff who will make determinations about entry/denial. Access control should be layered throughout the building as it will act as an obstacle towards threat progression.

C. Emergency Alerting:

The ability to communicate within the school using redundant systems is the third capability. Leadership should be able to communicate directions from many locations within the school. Subordinate locations within the building must be able to communicate with leadership as well. The school must have redundant capabilities to make emergency calls for help to off-site emergency organizations and inform the public with official information.

These three core standards can be effectively used to increase physical security at schools and serve as a starting point for security measures. All three standards are only effective when they are employed together as they form the three pronged response to a school's security profile.

A. Surveillance

School officials need to be aware of their surroundings and/or have the capability to observe danger and potential threats. Surveillance cameras assist with deterring dangerous behavior, play an important role in evidence collecting and can be very valuable when used to locate victims and or perpetrators.

Key elements of this standard should include the following core capabilities:

A1

•School officials need access to surveillance of the exterior of the facility's critical areas such as parking lots, playgrounds and entryways. This access should be from office/work/break spaces or other restricted faculty/staff areas. School surveillance should not be viewed by general population or visitors on a regular basis.

A2

•Internal security cameras should cover hallways and other common areas

A3

•Exterior security cameras should cover the exterior of the school at key areas such as common areas of congregation, areas of repeat incidence, critical infrastructure, and entryways.

A4

•Exterior emergency doors should be covered by security cameras

B. Access Control

Preventing unauthorized persons from entering a school facility is vital to protecting those in the school. How the public enters the facility instills expectations of behavior and sets boundaries, guidelines and reinforces policy.

Key elements of this standard include the following core capabilities:

B1

- There should only be one main entrance to all school buildings. Physical barriers/preventative measures should be in place allowing all persons to enter only from a singular access entry point after interactions/permissions/authorizations from school staff have been granted. If a school has multiple public access entry points they should all meet the same security standards. This standard should be in place at a minimum during normal school hours, or when a significant population of students is in the building.

B2

- The first opportunity for conflict is the main entrance. Conflicts may increase as entry is denied to a potential perpetrator. The area where visitors first interact with school staff should be fortified with protective construction material such as concrete and tempered glass. Reception personnel should be provided with the capability to be protected from perpetrators by mitigating physical interactions with them.

B3

- Credentials/ID system for faculty, staff, and visitors play a key role in identifying persons during emergencies. Emergency responders, parents and students need a way to rapidly identify authorized/non-authorized personnel. Identifying visitors in the building during an emergency is critical for evacuation and threat identification. Visitor credentials should have expiration dates and be returned/destroyed after use.

B4

- Glass features in or around the interior doors at the front entrance of the school, ground level of the school and/or the entry to a classroom should be designed in such a way that would prevent unauthorized intrusion into that space or the building if the glass was compromised. This can be done with reinforced glass, reinforced window panes and/or reduced sized window panes small enough to prevent unauthorized entry.

B5

- Classrooms are areas of protection during hostile actions. Classroom doors should be equipped with locking mechanisms that allow staff to lock the doors from the inside. Compliance with fire safety codes is required.

B6

- Door locking systems that are electronic allow administrators to effectively restrict access and/or mitigate lost/stolen metal keys. Understanding the type of locking system used at a school is very important. Generally, electronic systems offer a higher security ability.

B7

•Classroom doors that are glass panel equipped should also have shades that can block visibility into the room preventing unauthorized persons trying to locate victims.

B8

•Emergency doors should only be used during an emergency. These doors are designed to allow persons to exit, not enter. These doors should not have opening hardware accessible from the outside. These doors should be resistant to vandalism and unauthorized entry. The door hinges should not be exposed to the outside or they should have tamper resistant protective hinge coverings.

B9

•A proper and routine maintenance program is vital to ensuring school buildings perform as intended. Careful and routine inspections should ensure that all exterior doors are maintained properly and in good working order.

B10

•Exterior doors, and most doors in a school, should never be left unattended in the open position. These doors should all be equipped with commercial grade automatic closing hardware. Solid core doors offer much higher protection from forced entry and projectiles. All doors in the building should be solid core doors.

B11

•Unauthorized vehicles should never be allowed near school buildings where they could block an entrance and/or assist in accessing the building's roof. Exterior design of the building, landscaping and other crime prevention through environmental design techniques, should be used in such a way to prohibit unauthorized vehicles coming within close proximity of the building and doors.

B12

•Well intentioned and esthetically pleasing exterior design features of a building or landscaping can be used to gain unauthorized roof access. Trees, light posts, fences and other natural features are to name a few. These areas should be inspected routinely and mitigated near buildings.

C. Emergency Alerting

The ability to communicate effectively and rapidly to the entire school population during an emergency is a critical capability. Addressing the entire school's population when announcing response actions or coordinating rescue procedures is vital during emergencies. Making emergency requests for help, from offsite responders, should occur rapidly and clearly. Informing the public about emergency conditions is a key function of school safety.

Key elements of this standard should include the following capabilities:

C1

• School leadership should have the ability to address the entire school's population from the main office. Schools should have a public address system that allows communications from the office to the entire school including key places of assembly outside of the building.

C2

• All classrooms and key areas should be able to communicate with the office during emergencies. This includes, at least, classrooms and common areas.

C3

• In the event of a natural/manmade disaster or communication system overload, hard wired telephones and cell phone systems can be disabled or overloaded. Schools should have redundant communication systems/alerting systems in order to be able to summon emergency response services. (For example, radios, panic alarms.)

C4

• When emergency personnel arrive at school they need to be able to communicate with school staff and their own response organizations. Schools should have the necessary transmitters, receivers, and repeaters to ensure radio communications by emergency personnel everywhere in the building and these systems should be tested regularly.

C5

• In the event that the central office communications system is not available, a school should have the ability to make announcements from anywhere in the school other than the office.

C6

• Rapid communications to the public regarding urgent matters is an effective way to communicate official information to the public and help calm concerns. Schools should have a mass notification system for the community.

C7

• Emergency responders need to rapidly orient themselves to their surroundings during emergencies. Key access points such as windows and doors that are labeled with identifiers will assist responders in locating victims and perpetrators. Critical exterior doors/windows should be marked on the outside with a number or letter that is clearly visible to first responders.

C8

• Emergency doors should only be used during emergencies and not as routine or general entrances or exits. Perpetrator may attempt access via these doors. All emergency doors in the building should be equipped with alerting systems that signal if these doors are opened. When emergency doors alert, staff should check on them to detect disorder or threats. These doors should be covered by cameras to prevent repeat improper emergency door use.

C9

• All telephones, within the school building, used to contact emergency responders must be 9-1-1 compliant. 9-1-1 compliant means that all phones used to contact emergency responders must connect to New Hampshire's Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) by dialing the following sequence of numbers exclusively 9-1-1, 9-9-1-1 or 8-9-1-1. New Hampshire's public safety answering point (PSAP) system is a critical capability because the caller does not need speak or stay on the phone for any length of time. Once the 9-1-1 call is answered, the caller's location is immediately mapped and identified and emergency responders will be alerted. Every phone, used by the school to contact emergency responders, should be tested on a regular basis. For assistance with auditing and testing your phone systems to ensure they are mapped and configured properly, please contact the NH Division of Emergency Services and Communications, Data Operations Unit at 527-2069 or email at Database@e911.nh.gov.